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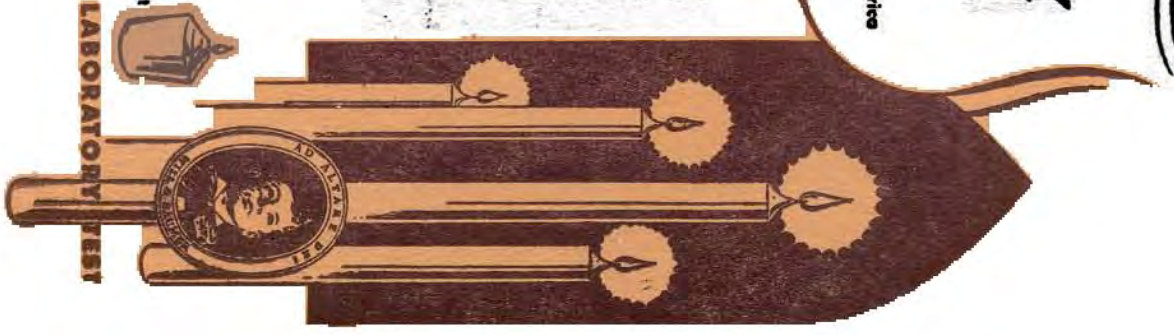
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**THE
CORD**

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

VOL. [] OCTOBER, 1962

The CORD

CHANGES IN THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE CORD

The Very Rev. Donald Hoag, O.F.M., Minister Provincial of the Province of the Most Holy Name, announced on September 7, 1962, the following changes in the editorial staff of THE CORD:

- Editor: REV. AUGUSTINE McDEVITT, O.F.M., S.T.D.
 Assistant Editor: REV. J. FOREST FADDISH, O.F.M.
 Managing Editor: REV. ERMIN KLAUS, O.F.M., Ph.D.

Entered as second class matter on November 25, 1950, at St. Bonaventure P. O., New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. All communications, whether of a business or a literary nature, should be addressed to THE CORD, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure P. O. New York. *Cum permissu superiorum.*

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MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Our "Circular" Argument

Father Regis Marshall, O.F.M.

Sit on the edge of a running brook and listen to its song without end; lie on a carpeted meadow and gaze at the clouds drifting to an unknown destiny; stand at the fringe of the silent sea and ponder its heaving sighs; feel the restless breeze as it jostles you like a puppy at play—this is NATURE ON THE MOVE, God's unfinished symphony. A repetition without repulsion, a frequency without fatigue, a multiplying without monotony—these are nature's sedatives for a sagging soul. It may be a feeble whisper or a distant echo, but the refrain is a distinct utterance of beautiful creation that it is so good to be alive and on the move.

He estimates death most accurately who appreciates life most completely. To be bored with life is to be half-dead already. When we have exhausted the vital words of Christ, "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), then we have also drained life of its exhilaration, excitement, and ecstasy. With Christ's dying begins our living. To discover that the very Mother of God is our life, our sweetness, and our hope, and that her Son is also the way, the truth and the life, is to reduce the argument in behalf of the dullness of life to an absurdity. Without God, and the Mother of God, life is but an endurance. We simply await death as one does a trolley. There is no anticipation and of course no preparation. Nature now has no lesson to teach, no example to give. Instead of life being a romantic tale we have but a sterile story whose climax is that there is no climax, a narrative whose final chapter is unprinted. Like the jumbled garble of an inebriate it becomes debased and profane. Without motive it is the cuckoo in the clock serving no further purpose than defining the present moment.

Against the orchestral background of nature's hymn, and in tune with it, is another strain far more beautiful, certainly more sonorous. This is the oft repeated prayer surnamed the Rosary. To the drudge the Rosary beads have less meaning than those that adorn a necklace. Perhaps an exquisite work of art, the Rosary is nevertheless a mere artifact, a product of a skillful hand, but one never to be fingered prayerfully. It is to be admired for its own sake. The Mother of God is not permitted to enter into its design. To attempt to "live" the Rosary is even more foolhardy.

Everyone is obliged to pray; hence the Rosary is for all. Composed of prayers learned from childhood days, it is always old and yet as refreshingly new as the rising sun. Whether it be the exultant instant of success or the weighty moment of tragedy, there is no occasion which cannot be complemented by the Rosary. The beads are our universal instrument of prayer. Is there a need? Ask through the Rosary. Has the need been fulfilled? Give thanks with the Rosary. It is through the Rosary that we place our strengthened hands into those of the Blessed Virgin. To lose touch with the Rosary is to lose something of one's grip on life, to slacken the hand at the plow.

A wheel that makes contact with the ground makes progress possible. With the holy Rosary we make contact with the Queen of Saints and advance in affection for the Immaculate Mother of God. The Rosary is our "circular" argument. With each revolution of the sun the world approaches its demise. With each orbit of the Rosary the devout soul strides closer to everlasting life. With each rotation of the sun there is an increase in nature, a daily growth. With each turn of the Rosary we add another step to the spiraling staircase that leads to Mary's throne. From God to God is the ultimate explanation of life. From the Cross to the Cross in the Rosary is explanation enough for praying the beads. The faithful disciple of the Master never tires of expressing his love for the Crucified. With each enunciation of the Rosary this genuine love becomes more indelible. To persevere in the Rosary is to purify such a love. The dross of doubt is removed. The beads then, without a doubt, become pearls of great price.

Our lives are to be spent within the circumference of the Rosary. Is there a more secure way of keeping a morning offering intact than by encircling it with the Rosary? It is thus that our daily efforts are surrounded with an aureole of Marian intentions. The temptation of wanderlust is ever with us. Would it be too crude to remark that the Rosary is Mary's lariat that safeguards us from stampeding for the enticements of this world? The lover of the Rosary is a humble servant of Mary held captive by her grace-full charms. For him the Rosary is the "manacle" of Mary. He never wearies of praying the Rosary. His days are numbered in terms of this holy chain reaction. Boredom is banished. In its place is to be found an excited anticipation that the ringlet of Hail Mary's in his hands will soon be converted into a halo over his head.

In these days of excursion the most adventurous is the round trip of the holy Rosary. We set out from the Cross and return to the Crucified. Like an auger that never drills without penetrating, so our Rosary too is never prayed without gaining a profound love for the

Cross. Christ on the Cross is the center of the universe, and with our Rosary we remain within the gravitational pull of Calvary. With each circuit of the beads we satisfy yet more the tugging of our restless hearts. When that last Rosary will have been said we will have arrived home, there to join the angelic chorus with our "Hail, Holy Queen".

The Joyful Mysteries

How nimble is the hand of an accomplished musician. How precise and steady the hand of the veteran wood-carver. How delicately poised is the creative hand of the artist. How beautiful are the hands! We employ our hands to give expression to the desires and frustrations of the human heart. They are the extension of our emotions and feelings. In our charity we have proffered them with the suggestion, "Could I lend you a hand?". When stymied we have admitted that "our hands were tied". Except for the ministering hands of the saintly priest, the hands are probably never more graceful than when entwined with the Rosary generously measuring a love for Mary with these holy counters. Surely it must be then that our hands most closely resemble the chaste hands of the Queen of Angels.

One day just before a Thanksgiving recess, a grade school teacher requested her pupils to draw a sketch that would be adequate to the occasion. She suspected that most of the images would be that of a turkey, a species of fruit, a Pilgrim or a pumpkin. Her suspicions were well-grounded except in the case of scrubby, little Mikie, the least gifted in her class. The picture he drew was crude, untidy, but very distinct. It was simply the uncertain outline of a human hand. But whose hand was it? Curiosity and excitement now dominated the class. Embarrassingly silent, Mikie became the object of a guessing game. "It must be the farmer's hand," volunteered the girl at his side, "He raises the turkeys." "No," retorted another, "It is the hand of a mother, for she prepares the Thanksgiving dinner." More profoundly another ventured, "That is God's hand, for He looks after us all." Impatient and intensely anxious, the teacher leaned over Mikie's shoulder and whispered, "Mikie, tell me, whose hand is it?". Mikie looked up and with eyes that betrayed affection blurted, "It's yours, teacher."

The Rosary came from the hands of Mary, the Cause of our Joy. With our hands we cheerfully pray the beads. In doing so we too become accomplished artists, creative in our loving, precise in our loyalty, delicate in our conversing. What a joy to contemplate the hands of Mary solemnly joined at the Annunciation; the outstretched hands of Mary as she approached Elizabeth; the tender, fondling hands of Mary at the manger; the selfless hands of Mary in the Temple;

the possessive hands of Mary upon the finding of her Child! Yes, how beautiful hands are! How graceful the hands that pray the beads! How elegant the hands of the Handmaid of the Lord! In this life we place our hands into those of the Blessed Virgin by placing them on the holy Rosary.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

There is no Rosary without the Crucifix. In like manner, a life without the Cross cannot be Christian. To the very end the lengthening shadow of the weighty Cross must trespass our every path. But without any equivocation the Master has said, "My burden is light". And there is only one way to discover how light, and that is to attempt to carry it. He who learns to shoulder his Cross will one day realize that it was the Cross that supported him. In her grief the Mother of Sorrows was braced by the Cross. What would become the most universal of symbols Mary experienced as real, accepted with resignation, and clasped without reproach. When Mary received her dead Son from the Cross, she accepted the most bitter offering the Cross could give. But accept it she did.

A recent news release informed us that the famous Pieta of Michelangelo will soon be exhibited in America. For millions of visitors this world-renowned sculpture will be the object of admiration and appreciation. The Pieta represents the anti-climax of Good Friday. Were we to regard it with curiosity and wonder alone, we would thereby fail to note that the sculpture is incomplete, that the mangled Body of Jesus in the arms of Mary is also her sacrificial gift to us. In the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary we have the prelude to the Pieta. In the Pieta we see the affliction of Mary brought to the surface. In the Mysteries we are given to witness the depths of her agony, the prophetic sword piercing her Immaculate Heart to the very hilt.

It was in a garden of delight that man opposed God. In Gethsemani, the garden of grief, God proceeded to save men. A scourge lacerated His exposed Body so that one day a wedding garment might adorn our glorified bodies. Blood streamed as thorns were tightened about His head so that the flow of Baptismal water on ours might loosen us from sin. Christ staggered beneath His Cross so that we might triumph over ours. At the Crucifixion the Saviour was utterly humiliated so that we, being humbled, might be exalted.

The Glorious Mysteries

It is common knowledge that the fingers of the blind become quite sensitive. This is a welcomed compensation for those burdened with

such a nocturnal affliction. With original sin our intellects were likewise darkened. But what a wonderful compensation we have in the holy Rosary! With the beads we can "feel" our way in this vale of shadows. Mary our Protectress guides us along this hazardous route to Him Who is our Resurrection. Wherever we pray the Rosary, be it in an auto, in the fields, or to and from work, it is there that Mary lowers her cincture within accessible reach of our groping hands. It is there that we continue our "hand over hand" ascent. Wherever the locale, it becomes for us the Mount of our Ascension.

One can detect the approach of a friar by the rustle of his beads. Mary too is made aware of our advances the moment we grasp the Rosary. When life appears to become wearisome and encumbered with a heaviness of heart, a slowness of foot; when the most sincere endeavors are marked with futility; then take hold of the Rosary, and at that instant Mary will have you in tow. There are few things in this life as uplifting as a well prayed Rosary. As for aid and comfort where can one better find it than in Mary, the Spiritual Vessel, filled to the brim with the needed grace of the Holy Spirit? She is the Virgin Most Powerful, so attractive to God that the momentum of her Assumption is strong enough to draw in its wake the entire human race. But we must first be attracted to her, and we will, if as loyal servants we recognize that in her Coronation Mary also became our Queen.

When time has laid its heavy hand on our shoulder and compelled us to lay aside the Missal we revered, the Breviary we cradled, the manuals we so caressingly palmed, there will yet remain the holy Rosary. Upon dying, the sense of hearing will be the last to depart. Immediately preceding it will be the sense of touch. After having felt the oft repeated Rosary for the last time, we will still remain receptive to the long awaited invitation, "Come ye blessed of My Father". For the apathetic bore who can discern nothing of profit in the Rosary, the gaining of Heaven will always be "touch and go". Not so with the soul that maintained daily "contact". Heaven will certainly be his for having always kept in "touch". There are no strangers in Paradise!

"Comrades, unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains!", is the fanatic cry of the dedicated Communist. "Hold fast to the chain that is the Rosary and you have everything to gain", is the plea of the Mother of God. Unite in the saying of the Rosary. Let it be the common route, that narrow path that leads to the Cross, our standard of victory. The Rosary is our "circular" argument whose one conclusion is: to pray to Mary is to pray to God, and to pray to God is the most exciting of adventures! Why, with Franciscan joy, and in the spirit of Brother Juniper, we can even look upon our Rosary as our "Mary-go-round".

We have the custom of placing the beads in the hands of the deceased, as though the Rosary is to be their master key to Heaven. On that day of surprises, and disappointment, Resurrection Day, how sad will be the lot of those who neglected this most salutary prayer. The instrument of judgment will be in their very hands. How delightful for the lovers of Mary, who in both their joys and sorrows, had recourse to their beads daily, and then only to count their blessings.

ANOTHER SAVED

A little mass of dead-black dirt
 That sighed when drenched by falling rain
 One tiny green peeped through the mud
 And raised itself to view the storm.
 A sunbeam helped the little thing
 To stand and stretch its weary limbs —
 A smiling violet raised her head —
 The sun bent low to kiss its child.

A sinner caught within the bog
 Who cried when blest by wholesome grace
 One contrite phrase, "I love" he said
 And raised his head to see the light.
 A heart then took the weary man
 To help him pray and laugh again.
 A smiling face had turned to God —
 And God bent low to kiss His child.

Father Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.



The "Transitus" Of St. Francis

On October 3rd—the eve of the Feast of St. Francis—or on the Feast itself, Franciscans the world over will re-enact the centuries-old ritual, commemorating the death of the Poor Man of Assisi. It is a rather short ceremony, but it is prescribed by the Ceremonial of the Franciscan Order, and has come to be known affectionately as the "Transitus".

The word "transitus" means passing; hence, we commemorate the passing of the soul of St. Francis from this earth to heaven. It is a deeply moving ceremony, and even though we may have participated in it many times, our emotions are not dulled or worn thin through familiarity with it.

But then, the purpose of the "transitus" is not to awaken emotions. It is actually to thank God for the many graces He so liberally bestowed upon His servant Francis, and to ask for the same grace he received, namely, a happy death and everlasting life with Christ.

While for many years, the ceremony has been confined to Franciscan churches, there is no reason why it cannot be used by our Franciscan Sisterhoods in their Motherhouses and larger communities. It would certainly contribute toward the spiritual edification of each of the Sisters, and would be a wonderful means of renewing that sense of love and loyalty to St. Francis which must be found in every Franciscan heart. The ceremony could be conducted in this manner.

A relic of St. Francis is placed on the altar for public veneration—or on the altar dedicated to St. Francis, if there is one in the chapel. The priest, vested in surplice, white stole and cope enters the sanctuary, genuflects before the main altar and proceeds to incense the relic of St. Francis. (If the relic is placed on a side altar, he proceeds to this altar and incenses the relic.) Immediately following the incensation, a brief sermon may be given on St. Francis, or the Sisters may read a description of the death of St. Francis as found in several of his biographies.

All now arise, and the choir proceeds to sing the beautiful antiphon: *O Sanctissima Anima*. This antiphon recalls in the present what took place seven centuries ago:

"O most holy soul, at whose passing the citizens of Heaven rise up in welcome, the angelic choir rejoices, and the glorious Trinity invites him, saying: Remain with us forever."

Then follows the singing of the plaintive Psalm 141 by alternating choirs. This is the Psalm which was dearest to St. Francis; when he realized that death was approaching, he asked his brethren to sing it for him as he lay dying on the dirt floor of the Portunucula on October 3, 1226. When we study this psalm carefully, we see that it is, in fact, the story of the Saint's life—the story of a soul filled with an ideal and longing to rally kindred souls to his side, yet meeting opposition and persecution at almost every step along the way. Now he longs for the moment of liberation from the prison of the body: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise your name: the just wait for me, until you reward me."

Having completed the psalm, the choir repeats the chanting of the antiphon: *Salve, Sancte Pater*. Then all kneel for a few moments of silent prayer, followed by the recitation of five Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glories.

Again we have recourse to song, this time paying direct tribute to St. Francis as "Holy Father, glory of your country, model of your followers, mirror of virtue, path of rectitude, rule of life: lead us from this land of exile to the realms above." All genuflect, and two chanters sing the Versicle: "Francis, poor and humble, enters heaven laden with riches." And the choir answers: "Amid heavenly songs of praise." The celebrant then rises and sings the prayer: "O God, who this day gave to the soul of our holy father Francis the reward of everlasting bliss: be pleased to grant that we who, with loving hearts celebrate the memory of his departure, may deserve to obtain the same happiness for our reward. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

After the *Dominus Vobiscum* there follows the chanting of the solemn *Benedicamus Domino* and *Deo Gratias*. The priest then incenses the relic and blesses the congregation. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament brings the ceremony to a close, as Franciscan hearts look forward with joyous expectation to the morrow—the earthly solemnity of their Father's joyous entry into heaven.

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As Eyes Turn Toward Rome

Father J. Forest Faddish, O.F.M.

"All roads lead to Rome." Could there be anyone who has not heard this familiar phrase? This statement will become a reality for some two thousand bishops and their theological advisors as they converge from North and South, from East and West, upon the Holy City for the opening of the Second Council of the Vatican on October 11, 1962. The eyes of the world will be focused upon this solemn gathering throughout its deliberations. But for all of us, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, not only will our eyes turn toward Rome but so will our hearts. Indeed, might we not say, that as the Shepherds of our dioceses depart for Rome, our hearts will go with them, sympathizing with them in this hour when such a terrible responsibility rests upon their shoulders?

Ever since January 25, 1959, when our Supreme Pontiff made his surprise announcement of a Council to a group of Cardinals, we have read with keen interest the news items concerned with the Council. We rejoiced that God in his goodness should have inspired our Holy Father with the desire to convoke a Council. Time and again, in his allocutions at solemn pontifical ceremonies, in addresses to the members attending the General Chapters of the many religious communities in Rome, and in his paternal talks to the laity, our Holy Father has thrilled us as he spoke of his hopes and desires for the Second Vatican Council.

He has repeatedly asked all the faithful to pray fervently for the success of the forthcoming Council. God alone knows the exact number of prayers and sacrifices which devoted children of Holy Mother Church have already laid reverently at the foot of Christ's throne in Heaven. And we may rest assured that the sons and daughters of St. Francis, mindful of their precious heritage of devotion to the person of the Vicar of Christ and to the Holy See, have been prominent in this army of "prayers".

Now as we stand at the threshold of the Council, what may we, sons and daughters of the Poverello of Assisi, do to promote the success of the Council? We are not bishops. We have not been invited to take part in the deliberations of the Council. But we are not necessarily excluded from it. Indeed, we will be partaking in it in a very special way because of our membership in the Mystical Body of Christ.

AS EYES TURN TOWARD ROME

The Bishops attending the Council are not like the members of the United States Congress, who are elected representatives of the people. Our Bishops receive their authority directly from God and they are directly responsible to Him for the exercise of that authority. Hence we cannot bring pressure to bear upon them. Being members of the Mystical Body, however, we know that the actions of one member have an influence upon the other members of this Body. And this is the marvelous mystery, that even the smallest of my actions, when performed out of love for God, may produce undreamed-of results.

Yes, this is why we can participate in the forthcoming Council, because through our prayers we may prevail upon our Divine Saviour to inspire the Conciliar Fathers to make those decisions which will be most conducive to the glory of God and His Church, and also to our own eternal welfare.

The humble friar, in sandaled feet, walking through a hot and humid jungle of South America, could raise his heart to heaven and pray: Dear God, it is your love which compels me to visit Your outcasts, and to bring Your message to them. It is not an easy task, Lord, but I offer my physical sufferings to You for the intentions of our Holy Father. Grant that His desires for the forthcoming Council may be realized, so that You may be glorified, and the Church may reap the benefits of these deliberations.

The Sister in the classroom, gazing upon the sea of bewildered faces before her, whispers in her heart: Dear God, each year seems to be getting more difficult. But then again, I'm not getting any younger, Lord, and I still want to do something worthwhile with my life. Would You be willing to accept my patient bearing of these little hardships in behalf of the success of the Second Vatican Council?

But while he may not traverse foreign lands in search of souls, or instruct youth, the lowly Brother will not be outdone in generosity. Confined to the kitchen from early morning until late at night, he finds he can make his work a prayer. And with each movement of the knife as he peels potatoes, with which he nourishes the physical life of his fellow friars, goes a prayer that God would bless the deliberations of the Council, so that through them our spiritual lives may be nourished.

So you see, the field is almost limitless. But to our sacrifices we should also join our prayers as we assist each morning at Holy Mass. We should daily raise our hearts toward Mary Immaculate, and to St. Joseph, the Heavenly Patron of the Second Vatican Council, imploring their unflinching intercession in its behalf.

And if we're looking for a prayer that would be worthwhile,

what better prayer could we find than the prayer composed by our own Holy Father for the success of the Council:

“Holy Spirit, who art sent by the Father in the name of Jesus to be with the Church by Thy presence and sure guidance, we pray Thee graciously to pour out the fullness of Thy gifts upon the Ecumenical Council.

“Sweet Comforter and Teacher, enlighten the minds of our Prelates who gladly assemble at the invitation of the Supreme Pontiff at Rome to celebrate the Sacred Council.

“May the Council be most fruitful, so that the light and strength of the Gospel may spread more and more among men and the Catholic religion and its missionary work happily prosper, making the teaching of the Church and her wholesome moral guidance fully understood.

“Sweet Guide of the spirit, strengthen our minds in truth, that we may be humble and obedient in heart, and that, receiving gratefully the decisions of the Council, we may hasten to put them into practice.

“We pray also for those still separated from the one fold of Jesus Christ, that, glorying as they do in the Christian name, they may come, at last, to unity under the one Shepherd.

“Show once more Thy wonders in our day as on the day of Pentecost. Grant to Thy Church, that, constant and united in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and following the lead of Blessed Peter, the reign of our divine Saviour may be advanced, a reign of truth, of justice, love and peace. Amen.”

THE KINGDOM

Sky taut above, across, beyond
 Candor of plain and arrogance of mountain
 Is not, after all, surprising,
 No more than tension of earth turned
 Precisely right, is.
 We may expect exactitude of God.

Smaller details of local administration
 May be, admittedly, endearing.
 Only churls will fail to credit
 God's contriving of flowers
 On planets' sweating faces.

Even the notion of cornered stars
 To prick light-holes in night
 Is quaintly charming:
 God indulging His fancies.

If He sometimes ripples the land with breezes
 We can be clever to recognize His mirth
 Over our shredding atoms, pestering space
 With rocket inquiries.
 God is patient with children.

All is predictable, given Him:
 Throb of a thousand worlds in ordered traffic
 Persistence of birds against the longest war.
 We can depend on God to stoke the fires
 Of sun each day and quarter the years
 With seasons.

Only, who will explain
 Spiney? crown

Father Roy M. Gasnick, O.F.M.

A few years ago, there was an editorial in the Newark, N. J. *Advocate* which expressed a rather wistful wish: "If only the mandate of the Spanish King, insisted on by Fr. Serra and the other Franciscans in California, proclaiming that non-white races were not to be enslaved, had taken effect in the non-Catholic colonies along the eastern seaboard . . . things might be different today!"

We can only guess how different it would have been. The peaceful, humanistic methods of Junipero Serra and his fellow Franciscans not only precipitated the abolition of slavery in the Spanish colonies, but also prevented the possibility of an interracial problem in all of the New World south of the Rio Grande.

But the Franciscan influence did not touch the Americans in the eastern part of the country. Slavery persisted until it was slaughtered in the cruelest of civil wars, which left ugly scars on the American Negro, still a pawn between North and South, still segregated and discriminated against because of his background.

And now, this same Franciscan influence, which could have helped prevent the American race problem 200 years ago, is exerting its power again, this time to help find a solution to the problem.

On Feb. 1, 1960, the Third Order of St. Francis in North America entered the field of race relations with a new movement called ACTION FOR INTERRACIAL UNDERSTANDING. The direct aim of this movement is to convince the Catholic community that it is time now to start practising the love of neighbor that Christ commanded, and that our Negro neighbors cry out loudest for this love since they are most often offended against.

This step taken by the Third Order opens up unlimited possibilities for the Catholic interracial movement, because suddenly 125,000 lay Catholics have been committed to work actively in helping solve racial problems. The 125,000 lay Catholics, grouped together in approximately 1,200 fraternities throughout the country, are located in the areas of Catholic life where they are needed the most—the parish, school, college and professional levels.

It would be an exaggeration to say that overnight 1,200 centers for interracial understanding had suddenly blossomed, but potentially that is what happened.

As can easily be seen, the whole scope of the Catholic interracial movement is immediately broadened. For the first time, a nationally organized Catholic group has adopted an interracial program as its official Catholic Action apostolate. Up to now, the burden of the movement has been carried by such groups as the Catholic Interracial Council organized for that specific purpose. They had to fight a long struggle just to win enough members to make themselves effective.

In the Third Order movement, members do not have to be recruited—they are there already; they do not have to be convinced of the necessity of social action, for they are committed to that by their Rule and Constitutions. The only work left to the Third Order then is to train and educate its members in methods of effective leadership in specific problems of race relations.

And what is perhaps the most significant fact about this new Third Order movement, is that a new dimension has been added to the cause of civil rights. It is first of all a new dimension of method: it is a popular movement, on the grass-roots level, where, in the relationship of one man with another, the real heart of the problem lies.

It is also a new dimension of doctrine: its approach is that of Christian love which the Third Order recognizes as the basic social force necessary to reform society. The goal of this love is to unite man and man with the bond of recognition of the tremendous dignity of each man. And this goal can be totally achieved only through personal responsibility and individual action, as the American hierarchy pointed out in their annual statement in 1960.

In this new interracial movement, the emphasis is on understanding and action. It emphasizes understanding, first of all, because it seems clear from past experience that legislation and pressure without preparation often tend to accelerate racial tensions. Preparation through understanding will not only aid the fulfillment of the law; it will, in reality, anticipate the law.

It emphasizes action, on the other hand, because interracial understanding can be achieved only through the concerted effort of ordinary citizens in their neighborhoods, schools, churches and places of employment.

It is not by accident that the Third Order has become involved in the interracial movement; the involvement was rather a necessity, something that had to come to pass.

Ever since the day when a young and as yet unconverted Francis of Assisi got down from his horse and embraced a leper, those who would follow the Seraphic Saint were pledged to a special mission to

all social outcasts; to lepers, the poor, the slaves, the down-trodden—to anyone who is socially despised, no matter why he may be despised.

I am not sure whether anyone ever called St. Francis a "leper-lover," but he was. He was a leper-lover not because he loved leprosy, but because he loved man. He would have loved that leper even if he had no leprosy; but the fact is that the leprosy was there, and so Francis spontaneously loved the man the more, to make up for the love denied him by others.

That was how St. Francis loved, and that was how he taught his followers to love. Indeed, this love has come to be more or less a hallmark of Franciscanism, even to the extent that the late Pius XII could refer to it as a "Franciscan doctrine."

Now, this insistence on Christian love as a social force might at first seem wildly idealistic, and it is. But for someone on fire with the love of God, an ideal is not something unattainable, but something that *has* to be attained. That is the meaning of an old inscription that was found on the chapel door of a Franciscan friary in Germany, "Learn from Francis, that ideals must be put into practise."

No one has more movingly described how effective this ideal is than Fr. John LaFarge, S.J., the founder of the Catholic interracial movement. In his book, *No Postponement*, he said:

Hitler . . . raged against the priests and brothers of the three Franciscan Orders precisely because these men were close to the people. The Franciscans were armed with a tremendous weapon . . . the power of God-inspired social love. The Nazis might have tolerated it if it had been an ineffectual love; but they could not for an instant put up with an effective love; a love that used modern methods, modern medicine, modern organization, and that went straight from the mystic reality of the Eucharistic God in the chapel . . . down into the aches and pains and wounds of ordinary suffering mankind . . .

The "secret" is simple: a passionate devotion to truth—truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of reason; a profound persuasion that the Gospel contains the solution for the agonizing ideological and socio-economic problems of the age, that modern man frantically craves love . . . and that the triumph of this love is to be achieved through personal, individual reform.

There is no mistaking the dynamism of a social movement which is so thoroughly entrenched and emersed in the Gospel, a social movement whose principles go far beyond the fondest dreams of sociologists and lawmakers, a social movement which presents a complete spirituality as its motivating force.

It is no wonder, then, that Pope Leo XIII once stated bluntly,

"My plan for social reform is the Third Order of St. Francis." The Pope could say that because he himself had adapted the Third Order Rule to contemporary needs, knowing from history the tremendous potentiality of an Order of lay people 3,000,000 strong throughout the world equipped with one training manual—the Gospel, and with two weapons—Christian love and the dignity and responsibility of the individual.

The Third Order's interracial movement has opened up a new frontier in race relations, in which the quest for interracial justice and charity finally come to rest in the homes, offices and backyards of American citizens where, and only where, the race problem can truly be solved.

How successful it will be is the challenge that faces all Franciscans in the United States.

Self-Denial In The Following Of Christ

(This article is from Chapter XIV of "Love Answers Love" by Cajetan Esser, O.F.M. and Engelbert Gau, O.F.M., translated by Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. It will be published in book form by the Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago.)

I

At the heart of the Franciscan life of penance stands the figure of Jesus Christ. His life is to be our life, his spirit our spirit, his ways our ways. The more we die to self in penance, to live completely unto God according to the Gospel, the more must we be ready to follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and become more like him in all things. The life of Christ must so penetrate, form and shape us, that we become wholly changed into him. But to become Christlike is no easy task for sinful man. It can be accomplished only by the mortification and denial of self. For this reason our Lord in the Gospel (and his words are repeated by Francis in the first Rule): "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹ This was one of the texts which Francis found when he opened the gospel book at San Niccolò to learn the will of God for himself and his first brethren.² Thus from the very beginning of the Order self-denial and mortification were part of that Franciscan life in which we are "to seek to follow in all things the footsteps of Jesus Crucified."³

I. The Motives of Self-denial and Mortification.

Francis was drawn to such a life of penance by the overwhelming love revealed in the life and sufferings of Christ for our sake: "The love of him who have loved us so much, we must in return love with all our heart."⁴ In consequence, Francis loved the crucified Lord with such an ardor as to be wholly conformed to him: "Francis was dead to the world, but Christ lived in him. The delights of this world became a cross for him, because the Cross of Christ was deeply rooted in his heart."⁵ "The whole life of this man of God, whether in public or in solitude, was centered on the Cross of the World."⁶ Because in the

Cross, the center and norm of his life, he saw revealed the greatness of God's love for man, that love compelled him to become like to the Crucified by self-denial and abnegation. When he meditated on the sufferings of Christ, his prayer was no mere exercise of piety but rather a true "*passionis Christi compassio*, a co-suffering with the passion of Christ."⁷ In the Passion Francis found not merely a model to imitate, but the very motive and reason for leading himself a crucified life.

Francis did much more than think on the sufferings of Christ as something that had happened in the past. He sought to enter into and identify himself with the victim of Calvary. Love has the remarkable power of making the lover like unto the beloved — and it manifested that power in the life of Francis.⁸ In particular, the Mass became for him a living co-offering of self with the oblation of Christ: "He followed that sacred and awe-inspiring action with all reverence, offering all his members in that sacrifice, and as he received the Lamb that was immolated for us, he offered his whole being with that fire which burned always on the altar of his heart."⁹ "Pure purus: in purity of person and with purity of intention," he joined "the true sacrifice of the most holy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the Mass, the unbloody commemoration of the death of the Lord, "who alone works therein as it pleases him," he desired to be accepted as a fellow-victim that through the Mass "his whole will, insofar as the grace of the Almighty aided him, might be directed to God alone."¹⁰ One striking phrase in particular reveals how deeply Francis grasped the interaction of the divine and the human in the Mass and in the life of penance and self-denial rooted in that sacrifice: "Keep back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that he may receive you wholly who has given himself wholly to you."¹¹ The life of penance is the conscious answer of love to the unspeakable love which God herein bestows on us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A further motive that drew Francis to self-abnegation was that "devout prayer: oratio devota" in which a man offers himself wholly to God. To pray for him was "to make a complete holocaust of all the fibers of his heart." In prayer he so surrendered himself to the workings of grace that Celano could say: "*Totus non tam orans quam oratio factus*: he was not so much praying as prayer personified."¹² Yet such

¹ II Celano, n. 127; cf. above, ch. 3, part 2.

² Cf. II Cel., n. 135: "*Versus amor Christi in eandem imaginem transformatur amantem.*"

³ II Cel., n. 201; cf. above, ch. 6, note 20.

⁴ Letter to the Chapter (Words, p. 144, 300ff.).

⁵ Ibid. (p. 147, 6-9).

⁶ II Celano, n. 95.

¹ Mart. 16, 24; Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 1 (Words, p. 250, 12-15).
² II Celano, n. 15 (cf. Words, n. 30, p. 54).
³ Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda minor*, ch. 7, n. 4. The present chapter incorporates much material from K. Esser, "*Die Lehre des hl. Franziskus von der Selbstverleugnung*," in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 18 (1955) pp. 161-174.
⁴ II Celano, n. 196.
⁵ II Celano, n. 211.
⁶ III Celano, n. 2.

devotion is possible only for one who has completely overcome self, as Francis suggests in instructing his friars "not only to mortify their passions and to repress the inclinations of the flesh, but to mortify their external senses also, through which death gains entry to the soul."¹³ The spiritual man, he knew, has no greater enemy than his own self,¹⁴ especially when he wishes to lose himself in prayer before God. On the other hand, when such prayer is offered in purity of heart, God comes to us to take up his dwelling in all fullness. If therefore we wish to offer ourselves in prayer, we can do so only if we offer the sacrifice of self in our whole life. One can lose himself in God only if he has lost self in God in all other phases of his life.

II. The Goal of Self-Abnegation.

If we here consider the goal of self-denial and mortification, we do not use the word in a philosophical sense, as though we were concerned with the relation of cause and effect. To posit a determined "goal" in the strict sense would be for Francis to interfere with God's work in us, since from God alone comes whatever is good in man. We should rather rephrase the question, to ask: to what, "insofar as the grace of the Almighty aids us," does a life of self-denial and abnegation lead us?

For Francis, such a life becomes, so to speak, the fulfillment of all he understood by poverty without and within, since it is a life "without anything of one's own," a life in which a man "empties" himself of everything, a life which is a constant dying to self. Hence in his praise of the virtues Francis expresses this simply and plainly: "There is no man in all the world who can possess any of you unless he first die" to himself.¹⁵ To die to self is to deny oneself, to keep back nothing of self for oneself, to be wholly "pure" of heart, to live in total poverty of spirit. Only when we practice such a living death can our life be truly religious and centered on God. Only in such as do this is there that void into which the charity of God can be poured forth to overflowing.¹⁶

The very first "goal" then of self-denial and mortification is to taste the joys of divine love, a lesson Francis learned in his own conversion when God told him: "If thou wouldst know me, despise thyself."¹⁷ Whoever wishes to know God and experience his love must contemn himself, rise above himself, and — as Francis once expressed

¹³ I Cel., n. 43.

¹⁴ Cf. II Cel., n. 122.

¹⁵ Salute to the Virtues (Words, p. 73).

¹⁶ Cf. Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 and 23 (Words, p. 277, 9-19; and p. 282, 28-283, 28).

¹⁷ II Celano, n. 9.

it — be stripped, "*expropriatus*," of any desire to possess anything.¹⁸ Only when he is free from everything earthly, but especially free from self, can he really love God and truly serve him.¹⁹

Self-denial and mortification are likewise means of removing whatever might hinder the action of God in us. Because they make us truly poor, they help us submit unreservedly to the will of God in our regard. This Francis implies in speaking of the denial required by obedience: "That man abandons all he possesses and loses his body (that is, himself) who yields his whole self to obedience in the hands of his superior."²⁰ Such "true obedience,"²¹ as the expression of radical self-denial and total abnegation, is that complete submission to the will of God which can be found only in that man who has given up all will of his own. For such a man who is wholly centered on God and God alone, all things work together unto good — man, and things, and circumstances, no matter who or what they may be, help, not hinder, him in loving God. The "spirit of the Lord" alone controls and guides his life because he has surrendered himself completely to the "*sancta operatio*, the holy workings" of that spirit.

Lastly, the primary purpose of such mortification is not the sanctification of the individual but the good of the kingdom of God. For the Franciscan, one word sums up the whole practice of such abnegation: "*minoritas*: the virtue of being little." Only when his sons preserved that "littleness" did Francis believe they could best "bring forth fruit in the Church of God."²² He did not say, we might note, "for the Church," but "in the Church." There is no greater obstacle to the inner life of the Church, to her growth as the kingdom of God, than the vain desire for power or domination to which her members too often succumb, even in matters ascetical. She has need therefore of such among her members who strive to be absolutely poor and "subject to every human creature for God's sake,"²³ who are thereby truly "lesser" (*minores*) than all others. This is the vocation of the followers of Saint Francis, to "bring forth fruit in the Church of God" through utter "*minoritas*" attained by way of self-abnegation and mortification, to "edify" her from within, and thus in her and through her prepare as "pilgrims and strangers"²⁴ for the glory that is to come.

¹⁸ II Celano, n. 194 (cf. Words, n. 56, p. 62).

¹⁹ Cf. Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 (p. 277, 9-18).

²⁰ Admonitions, n. 3 (p. 131, 18-21).

²¹ Cf. Letter to a Minister (p. 161, 7).

²² Cf. II Celano, n. 148; for details, see chapter 18, part 2, below.

²³ Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 16 (p. 267, 24-25); and Letter to the Faithful (p. 190, 4-6); and especially chapter 18 below.

²⁴ Final Rule, ch. 6 (p. 289, 19).

III. The Practice of Mortification.

If such are the motives for the life of mortification and self-denial Francis proposes to us, and the goal to which such a life leads, the question still remains how such an ideal is to be practiced. This is no idle question, since we shall soon discover that Francis said very little indeed on specific forms or practices of mortification. For him, it was much more important to emphasize the spirit of self-denial and our whole attitude toward it than to lay down definite norms and regulations. He leaves no room to doubt that for God's sake and for his kingdom we must deny self and mortify all inordinate movements of self-love. But how this was to be done in individual circumstances, he preferred to leave to the guidance of "divine inspiration," and not hamper the free workings of God's grace by detailed and pre-established rules.²⁵

At the same time Francis laid great stress on the true Christian spirit in which his followers were to face the problems of daily living and contacts with his neighbor in his weakness as much as he would wish to be treated by him were he in a like situation.²⁶ He warned them therefore against the misuse of the time God gives us here, which "the flesh (self) so often wastes on useless trifles."²⁷ All the friars should rather "remember, wherever they are, that they have surrendered themselves in soul and body to the Lord Jesus Christ; and for love of him must expose themselves to enemies visible and invisible."²⁸ This attitude is of particular importance in time of sickness. Hence Francis asks "the sick friar to give thanks to the Creator for all things, and to desire to be whatever God wills for him, whether healthy or sick; for all those whom God has destined for eternal life, he instructs by the goad of suffering and infirmity and by compunction of spirit; for thus says the Lord: "Those whom I love I rebuke and chastise."²⁹

Certainly we are not wrong in saying that for Francis the whole life he proposed to his sons, especially the poverty and humility it demands of them, is itself a perfect pattern of self-denial and abnegation. A life truly formed and shaped by the Rule of the Friars Minor, that of Saint Clare, or of the Third Order, contains in itself all that the

Gospel demands of self-denial and abnegation. Whoever follows his Rule faithfully will be free from everything, free from self, free entirely for God.

At the same time, Francis would never let us forget the words of the Gospel, that no matter what we do, even to the utmost of human powers, in mortifying and denying ourselves, we must realize that before God we are but useless servants (cf. Lk. 17, 10). We do not save ourselves. It is "God alone who will redeem us through his mercy" and "by his grace alone."³⁰ We can never let ourselves think that asceticism, however systematically pursued, will make us holy. We do but remove thereby the obstacles to God's work in us! Were asceticism made an independent means or an end in itself, it would be a hindrance and not a help to the work of divine grace.

As a result, our asceticism must be governed and guided by a virtue which played no small role in Francis' own approach to penitential practices: "He told the friars that every offering made to God was to be seasoned with salt (Levit. 13), and warned that each must consider his own physical capacity in honoring God. It was just as much a sin, he asserted, to deny 'indiscrete' what the body needed as it was to fall into gluttony and give the body more than was needful."³¹ According to Saint Bonaventure, Francis "taught the friars to use discretion as the 'charitoeser' of the virtues; not that discretion which the flesh would advise, but that which Christ taught, whose most holy life is the sure model of all perfection."³² In the last analysis, then, such "discretio" means that we are completely docile to the grace of God, and with holy prudence judge what we must do to follow Christ. It is by no means synonymous with human prudence³³ and certainly not with laxity. Rather, for Francis and the Franciscan it has an eminently Christian meaning: it is that virtue in the following of Christ which leads us to "serve Christ the Lord without any reluctance; *sine ulla repugnantia*."³⁴ For our Seraphic Father, *discretio* is intimately linked with *pietas et misericordia*, piety and mercy: "Though he earnestly introduced his brothers to an austere life, he did not favor an ironclad severity which was not tempered by mercy (*pietas*) nor seasoned with the salt of discretion."³⁵ The Saint himself says: "Where there is mercy

²⁵ Fasting and abstinence are prescribed according to the usage of that epoch. Yet Francis remarks expressly that "in time of clear necessity the friars may make use of whatever is necessary for them, as the Lord gives them grace; for necessary has no law" (Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 9: p. 263, 1-4). Both Rules make exceptions, too, in regard to the clothing of the friars.

²⁶ Admonitions, n. 18 (p. 138, 26-29): cf. Letter to a Minister (p. 161, 1ff.).

²⁷ Cf. II Celano, n. 134.

²⁸ Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 16 (p. 268, 16-21).

²⁹ Ibid., ch. 10 (p. 263, 14-21).

³⁰ Ibid., ch. 23 (p. 282, 23-24): Concluding prayer of the Letter to the Chapter (p. 150, 18).

³¹ II Celano, n. 22 (cf. also Words, n. 127-128, p. 99f.).

³² *Legenda maior*, ch. 5, n. 7.

³³ *Discretio*, from the Latin *discernere*, to judge or distinguish between things, might well be called discernment in English, rather than prudence.

³⁴ II Celano, n. 211 (Words, n. 266, p. 228).

³⁵ *Legenda maior*, ch. 5, n. 7.

and discernment (*discretio*), there is neither superfluity nor hardness of heart."³⁶

Piety and discretion must be the judges whether what one is engaged in at the moment is actually, here and now, in accord with the will of God, whether it is done "with the blessing of God," "as the Lord shall give one grace," "through divine inspiration," "as may seem to them most advisable according to God," "as the Lord shall ever inspire them." Such phrases, used so frequently by Francis in regard to self-denial and penance, characterize that Franciscan discretion and moderation which is closely linked with the exhortation of Christ: "Be merciful, therefore, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6, 36). They remind us that in the end God is our guide and not any self-appointed standards of asceticism which might well indicate that even in this area of religious life we seek to impose our own will. Only when such a selfless spirit pervades us will our asceticism, our self-denial and mortification, retain its proper role and truly give glory to God.

IV. Application.

In his teaching on self-abnegation, Francis is careful to give first place to God in the actions of man. "The Lord gave me" is a key-phrase in his Testament, and indeed in his whole life even down to the finest detail. When he was told on his sick-bed by God's representative that he had lived too strict a life, he reacted immediately: "Rejoice, Brother Body, and spare me, because now I gladly do what you wish and hasten to fulfill your complaints and desires."³⁷ The asceticism of Francis is thus free of all obstinate attachment to self-imposed goals, for its primary concern is to let God's grace work unhindered in the hearts of men.

At the same time, Francis is careful to give first place to God in judging the worth of man. "God alone is good, and to him belongs every good," is a thought that filled his prayer³⁸ and colored his whole teaching on asceticism, self-denial and penance. To God alone, and not to self, he ascribed all the graces of his life, graces which God "the great Almsgiver"³⁹ had given to one unworthy of them. Because he did not wish to be "a robber of God's treasury,"⁴⁰ everything to him was the work of God, the gift of God, and God himself the greatest good a Christian could possess. Thus Francis kept his teaching and practice of asceticism free from all human conceit.

³⁶ Admonitions, n. 27 (Words, p. 142, 19-21).

³⁷ II Celano, n. 211 (Words, n. 266, p. 228).

³⁸ Cf. the preceding chapter, end of part 2.

³⁹ II Celano, n. 77.

⁴⁰ II Cel., n. 99 (Words, n. 73, p. 76).

Finally, Francis was careful to give first place to God's love in man's love. "In *sancta caritate, quae Deus est*: in the holy love which God is,"⁴¹ was the spirit in which he sought to do everything. He could not have put it more clearly or pointedly. Nothing must stand in the way of God's love as it comes down to the heart of man. Thus is the asceticism of Saint Francis free from all self-seeking, self-centered love. Instead, it desires but one thing: to attain that love which overflows from God to us, and in turn to give that love to others. Where this happens, there is the kingdom of God.

All this, we might conclude, Francis sums up in his beautiful prayer: "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, give to us poor ones for Thy sake to do what we know Thou wilt, and always to will what pleases Thee, that inwardly cleansed, inwardly enlightened and set aflame by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by Thy grace alone come to Thee, O most High, who in perfect Trinity and simple Unity livest and reignest and hast all glory, God Almighty, through all ages of ages. Amen."⁴²

⁴¹ Non-confirmed Rule, ch. 22 (p. 277, 8-9).

⁴² Concluding prayer of the Letter to the Chapter (p. 150, 10-21).

Jesus Christ; High Priest of Creation

Michael D. Weilach, O.F.M.

II. THE LITURGY

In the preceding part of this article, we have seen that the whole universe, summed up in Christ, was created by God to give Him glory— that since all creatures culminate in Christ the High Priest, the whole created world can be called, at least in a figurative or applied sense, "liturgical." But we have already observed that Fr. Benigar's description of the universe as a temple is not to be taken figuratively, that it is the literal truth. It now remains for us to see how Christ exercises His Priesthood in the concrete—how Christ leads all back to God through the Liturgy. For it is in the Liturgy that God receives that very glory for which He created the universe!

A. The Pre-eminence of the Liturgy

Marital Lekeux, O.F.M., in his recent work, *The Art of Prayer*, explains that "man, as well as the angels, is above all an adorer, a being constituted for prayer. The meaning of life is adoration."¹⁷

This is the inescapable conclusion which must follow from any serious consideration of man's ultimate destiny. And this is what St. Francis had in mind when he insisted that whatever work his followers did, they were to be careful not to "extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which all created things are meant to contribute."¹⁸

Thus, by its very nature prayer, which has for its principal object the uniting of the creature and his Creator is an act of love, is an act of the highest dignity and importance. But this is only half the picture. In the supernatural order which God has in fact willed, we do not pray in isolation; rather Christ prays in us, for we "have received the Spirit of adoration, which makes us cry out, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Christ gives an inestimable value to all our prayers before they reach the Father. Has He Himself not told us this? "As long as you live on in Me, and My words live on in you, you will be able to make what request you will, and have it granted" (John 15:7).

Nevertheless, all prayer does not have the same value. The Liturgy, which is the official prayer of the Mystical Christ, is far nobler and more efficacious than any private prayer. It is not merely a collectivity of private prayer, but it belongs to a completely different order. As Valentine Breton, O.F.M., writes, the sacraments and other liturgical

¹⁷ Marital Lekeux, O.F.M., *The Art of Prayer* (tr. P. Oligny: Chicago, 1960), 3.
¹⁸ *Rule of the Friars Minor*, chapter 5.

O HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL

O holy Guardian Angel,

Be ever at my side!

By God thou hast been given

To be my Friend and Guide;

By thee I'm not forsaken,

Whatever may betide.

To thee, my strong Protector,

My troubles I confide.

With constant love thou carest

For me by day and night;

Be ever my adviser,

That I may do what's right.

Oh, keep my soul and body

From ev'ry harm and blight,

And through life's darksome dangers

Lead me to Heaven's light!

Father Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.

actions are necessarily of a higher order, "since their efficacy bears a more authentic divine stamp of approval."¹⁹ Breton's reason is not the ultimate one, however; for one might ask, "Why do these actions bear a more authentic stamp of approval?" And the answer would have to be that Christ Himself prays in them—not only as Mediator, as He does in our private prayers, but in an altogether different and more sublime manner.

Indeed, if the words of Lekeux are true, if man is "above all, an adorer, a being constituted for prayer," then they certainly apply in the fullest sense to Christ, Who is the perfect Adorer, and Who alone gives God perfect praise and adoration. For Christ alone realizes perfectly that purpose for which God decided to create the universe. Pius XII has explained that the entire Liturgy, comprising the Mass, the sacraments, and the Divine Office, aims at uniting our souls with Christ and sanctifying them through Christ "so that He may be honored and through Him and in Him the Most Holy Trinity" may receive the infinite glory which Christ alone can render to God.²⁰

B. The Liturgy as "Reductio"

The Liturgy, moreover, is not confined to this visible world of ours: it is carried out in heaven also:

And I saw a great multitude, past all counting, taken from all nations and tribes and peoples and languages. These stood before the throne in the Lamb's presence, clothed in white robes, with palm-branches in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, To our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, all saving power belongs. And all the angels that were standing round the throne, round the elders and the living figures, fell prostrate before the throne and paid God worship; Amen, they cried, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God through endless ages, Amen. (Apoc. 7:9-12).

But this universal homage paid through Christ to the Holy Trinity corresponds perfectly to what we have described as the third division or stage of theology: the consummation or "reductio" (leading back) of all things to God through Christ. Again, in the words of Pius XII, "By assuming human nature, the Divine Word introduced into this earthly exile a hymn which is sung in heaven for all eternity. He unites to Himself the whole human race and with it sings this hymn to the praise of God."²¹ Although the Holy Father speaks explicitly only of the "human race," there is in reality no distinction to be made between men and angels in this context; as the Preface

¹⁹ Valentine-M. Breton, O.F.M., *Franciscan Spirituality* (tr. Frey; Chicago, 1957), 31.

²⁰ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (tr. N.C.W.C.), n. 171.

²¹ *Ibid.*, n. 144.

says, "per quem majestatem tuam laudant angeli"; it is through Christ that the angels honor God, because He is their Head just as He is ours, and He offers their praise to God just as He offers ours. Bettoni has expressed this truth well in this passage:

By assuming human nature the Word is placed at the center of creation and in condition to thrust His divine influence in all directions, toward the depths or toward the heights, and to exercise His function as Head over all irrational creatures,

on the one hand, and over the angels, on the other.²²

Certainly the great doxology which closes the Canon leaves little doubt in the matter: "per ipsum et cum ipso, et in ipso est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti omnis honor et gloria . . ."

A few moments ago, we saw that Pius XII enumerates three principal aspects of the Liturgy: the Mass, the sacraments, and the Divine Office. A brief consideration of each of these aspects will make our explanation of the "reductio" more clear and concrete.

The Mass (here understood more as sacrifice than as sacrament) is the Liturgy in the strictest possible sense; therefore we may consider it as the "reductio" in the strictest sense too. In the Mass, Christ unites within Himself all the angels, all men, and all material creatures, aptly symbolized by the species of bread (a unity composed of many grains of wheat) and wine (produced by the juice of many grapes), and He offers this holocaust as a perfect act of adoration to His heavenly Father in the identical sacrifice which He once consummated in a bloody manner on Calvary. Thus He fulfills the destiny of the whole of creation by giving infinite glory and honor to God.

If we consider the Sacraments (including the Mass in its sacramental aspect), we see two important features worthy of our examination: the cause-element and the sign-element.

Insofar as the sacraments are instrumental causes of grace, they effect infallibly a vital union between Christ and His member who receives them. This is precisely the penultimate stage of St. Bonaventure's "reductio," however; in the *Hexameron*, the Seraphic Doctor speaks explicitly of our union with Christ in His Mystical Body, a union effected by grace, which comes to us through the sacraments.²³

The sign-element of the sacraments—both in the essential and accidental rites—is well explained by P. Albrighi as being part and parcel of the work of the teaching Church as she strives to unite us more closely to Christ.²⁴ And this truth is discussed at length from the

²² Bettoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 86f.

²³ St. Bonaventure, *Hexameron*, I, 20 (ed. Quarachi, V, 332f).

²⁴ Pietro Albrighi, *Sacra Liturgia* (Vicenza, 1940), 13f.

ascetical viewpoint by Breton, who points out that the Liturgy is one of the primary means of achieving more perfect knowledge of Christ and hence greater intimacy with Him. According to Breton, the Liturgy is a living representation of the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels. Participation in the prayer-life of the Church therefore allows us to increase our understanding of Christ's own life, to take part in it, and so to be united more perfectly to Christ.²⁵ Pius XII has observed that this sign-element of the Liturgy was developed by the Church so that her teaching authority might "reach the minds and hearts of Christ's people more readily."²⁶

In another part of his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the same Pope speaks of the Divine Office as an integral part of the Liturgy. He goes on to say that the Divine Office is "the prayer of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, offered to God in the name and on behalf of all Christians, when recited by priests and other ministers of the Church and by religious who are deputated by the Church for this."²⁷

The Mass, the sacraments, and the Office, then, are three aspects of one reality: the worship of the Mystical Christ; they are the concrete setting in which we find realized the more or less theoretical explanation of St. Bonaventure, that Christ "leads back" all of creation to God.

Brief as it has been, the foregoing explanation of Christ's threefold liturgical activity suffices to show the truth and importance of Benigar's description of the universe as a "temple for the glory of God" and of Christ as the "cornerstone" and "High Priest" of this temple. The perspective in which we have viewed the Liturgy has enabled us to see it more clearly in its true light as the ultimate stage of the cycle of God's activity *ad extra*; truly, we may apply to it the words Scheeben uses to describe the Incarnation, and we may call it the act in which "creation receives its ultimate and most august consecration" through Christ.²⁸

APPENDIX: THE SUBSTANCE AND THE MODE OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Accustomed as we are to thinking of ourselves as the center of the universe, we men ordinarily view the priesthood, and in particular the priesthood of Christ in the New Law, as consisting essentially in offering sacrifice for sin, in preaching, and in dispensing the Sacraments.

²⁵ Valentine-M. Breton, O.F.M., *In Christ's Company* (tr. M. D. Mellich, O.F.M.: Chicago, 1962), 48-50.

²⁶ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (ed. cit.), n. 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 144.

²⁸ Matthias J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (tr. Vollert: St. Louis, 1946), 402.

—particularly the Eucharist and Penance. These are, of course, priestly functions, but they are only the forms of priestly activity, not its essence. The essence of the priesthood is mediation: giving God's gifts to creatures and returning their homage to Him.

If this is the essence of priestly activity, however, we can easily see that Christ is the priest par excellence, independently of sin or sacrifice or any other particular concrete reality in our experience: He is priest primarily because He is the cornerstone of creation. St. Paul draws out the implications of this central importance of Christ in Col. 1:16, where he tells us that all things, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, were made in Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.

The priesthood of Christ therefore consists in summing up the whole universe in His single act of self-oblation to God—in ordering and unifying all things so that they can reach their fulfillment in Him. In this perspective Christ could still be the High Priest of creation if there had been no sin—as Head of all creatures, He could conceivably have gathered their worship and presented it to God in a quite different manner from the one He uses in reality.

But we can make no certain statement about such a hypothetical universe; nor are we seriously interested in doing so. There can be no substance without a mode, and so we must look to concrete reality to determine the mode of Christ's priesthood.

This distinction between essence and mode is a traditional one generally used with respect to the Incarnation itself: the term *essence* or *substance* denoting the mere fact of the Incarnation, and the term *mode* denoting the kind of Incarnation God decreed—i.e., an Incarnation in passible flesh. We are using the distinction the same way here with regard to our Lord's priesthood. The essence, we said, lies in unification and mediation; the mode, as we shall now explain, is one of suffering and sacrifice.

Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M., expressed this fact well when he wrote that "God, in His eternal wisdom, decided in favor of a suffering Christ rather than a glorious Christ."²⁹ This is important: Christ did not suffer simply because man sinned; that is putting the cart before the horse. Man was permitted to sin only that Christ might draw greater good out of the evil through His suffering. This is what Garrigou-Lagrange means when he says that "original sin was permitted for the sake of Christ."³⁰

²⁹ Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M., "Suffering," *The Cord* 10 (1960), 2.

³⁰ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.F.M., "Mortuum Incarnationis fuit motuum misericordiae," *Angelicum* 7 (1930), 299.

In His wisdom, then, as Buytaert says, God decided in favor of a suffering Christ. He decided that the merits Christ would acquire, chiefly through His Passion and death, would play an important and basic role in His plan for the universe. This is why suffering and sacrifice, insofar as they are united with those of Christ or prefigure those of Christ, are inseparable, in the present order of things, from the priesthood itself, why, in other words, they form its "mode."



WHERE LOVE IS

Where love is

There is joy —

And love is like

A deep, deep singing,

Out of all measure

For us mortals to gauge.

Joy is out

With the larks singing —

Singing unasked for

Into eternity's fair

Shimmering vault.

Branded with these two

— Love, Joy —

Firm-joined in cruciform

Stands Francis

And holds their red blossoming

In his bare palms,

A love-rose on his heart,

Singing.

Sister M. Antanina, F.M.M.